

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 8, 2016

Dear Chairman Cochran and Ranking Member Mikulski:

The Pell Grant program provides eligible low- and moderate-income college students necessary financial assistance while pursuing their education. In the current academic year, the program will provide close to 8 million individuals with up to \$5,815 for this purpose. While we are members of a diverse coalition of organizations that represent interests ranging from students, businesses, state and local government, and higher education institutions, we are aligned, in part, by our universal support of the Pell Grant program and its ability to make education and training more affordable.

We write to encourage you to adopt the year-round Pell language included in the Senate Labor-Health and Human Services-Education (L-HHS-ED) appropriations bill. Since the elimination of year-round Pell (and other Pell provisions) as part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2012*, there has been bipartisan recognition of the need for more flexible financial aid policies. Currently, federal financial aid does too little to support students who are older, returning to school, or seeking specific skills and credentials for work. These students, who may be employing strategies such as combining work and learning, accelerating their time to degree, and/or attending school part-time and year-round, need this flexibility to more successfully persist and complete their program of study.

Reinstating year-round Pell would provide that flexibility, allowing students to receive Pell throughout the entire academic year. Adopting this policy would more formally recognize that the needs of today's low-income students are inadequately served by the current Pell Grant program. The limitation on year-round receipt conflicts with the life circumstances of many low-income students, who may increasingly require more scheduling and financing flexibility. That need has been demonstrated: prior to the provision's elimination, approximately 2 million recipients were benefiting from the availability of year-round Pell Grants.

By making Pell Grants available year-round, many students will have enough available resources to persist or accelerate their learning, and no longer need to take on additional student debt. Adopting the change proposed in the Senate L-HHS-ED appropriations bill would, therefore, be a significant benefit to millions of Pell recipients pursuing their postsecondary and workforce goals.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Business Roundtable  
Center for Economic Development  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
Jobs for the Future

National Association of System Heads  
National Skills Coalition  
New America  
State Higher Education Executive Officers  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation